

THE MONTH IN HISTORY

INTERREGNUM IN PALESTINE

The UN Goes Home—Reaction to Partition—Immigration

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THE delegates to the Assembly of the United Nations hurried from Lake Success to catch the ships and planes which would take them back to the countries in whose names they had spoken to an attentive world. Many, returning to nations torn by industrial and political strife, might be pardoned if they were to cast a wistful backward glance at a country where Democrats and Republicans, Wall Street and the CIO and the AFL, were all agreed in principle on the Marshall Plan. And certainly in a world in which hunger and devastation had so commonly followed war, the Arcadian plenty of an unprecedentedly prosperous United States had a lure of its own.

Yet for all that, most of the delegates were eager enough to get home to the families and the countries they had left behind. Many things had contributed to the sense of futility which made them glad to get back to the real world, even in its more unpleasant aspects.

This was not to deny that the session of

the Assembly had offered some grounds for satisfaction to those who were easily satisfied.

Session's Balance Sheet

The United States delegation, and those who thought more in terms of forms than of the realities behind them, could hail the decisions of the Assembly on Greece, on Korea, on the creation of the so-called "Little Assembly." Yet, since in all these instances the Soviet Union and its satellites had refused to accept the decisions of the Assembly, they remained without practical effect. In the cases of Greece and Korea, the Assembly could appoint commissions and propose solutions, but it could not coerce an unwilling Soviet Union into paying them any heed. Nor could the "Little Assembly" be expected, in the face of a Soviet boycott, to function more effectively than its parent body—whose authority the Russians at least theoretically recognized. These decisions might help to fix the blame for the continuing deadlock between the United States and the Soviet Union; they did not in any measure serve to resolve that deadlock.

Indeed *Izvestia* reported that the Soviet Union had won a significant victory by defending a "just cause," while the United States had suffered a "shattering defeat." The American successes in respect to Greece, Korea, and the "Little Assembly" it attributed to the "mechanical voting" of delegations which bowed to American "dictation." And it pointed out triumphantly that these victories made no differences anyway, since the Soviet Union had no intention of recognizing them. On the other hand, *Izvestia* held

THE aim of "The Month in History" is to select out of the stream of events the principal developments affecting Jews—in America, Europe, Palestine, and elsewhere throughout the world—and to assess without bias their significance in the light of a long-range historical perspective. MAURICE J. GOLDBLOOM was associate editor of *Common Sense* and has had years of experience as a news analyst. He is now in Europe, where he is spending some weeks studying the strength of democratic forces. Mr. Goldbloom was born in New York City in 1911 and is a graduate of Columbia University.

that the Soviet Union had successfully repelled the attack which the United States had launched against the principle of unanimity—sometimes less affectionately referred to as the veto. The success of this attack, *Izvestia* declared, would have menaced "the very existence of the United Nations Organization." Clearly, the Russians remained unconvinced by either the debates or the votes of the Assembly.

The Road to Partition

But if the Assembly had produced little comfort for those who hoped that its sessions might in some degree heal the partition of the world, it gave eminent satisfaction to those who asked that it achieve the partition of Palestine—though this too was in doubt until the final moment.

The principal question which had blocked the partition subcommittee of the Assembly's Ad Hoc Committee on Palestine, and served as a rallying point for opponents of partition, was that of implementation. The United States had quickly withdrawn its original proposal for a volunteer force—perhaps because it found little support, perhaps merely because it had been offered on the spur of the moment and appeared considerably less attractive on the morning after. But this left the problem of carrying out an Assembly decision still unsolved, since the British steadfastly refused to heed American suggestions that they accept that responsibility. Britain had made her position in this respect abundantly clear at the very beginning of the discussion. Colonial Secretary Arthur Creech-Jones had at that time announced her intention of surrendering the mandate and her unwillingness to have any part in imposing a solution not agreed to by both Jews and Arabs. Subsequently, this had been reiterated several times by British spokesmen both in London and at Lake Success.

Nevertheless, the idea of leaving Britain the job of overseeing the transition period was so attractive to the United States delegates that they wrote it into the report of the partition subcommittee. Hence when Sir Alexander Cadogan once again reiterated the British position, it was hastily decided to solve the problem of implementation by pretending it did not exist. It was simply assumed that, when Britain surren-

dered the mandate, Jews and Arabs would cooperate with the UN's supervisory committee in setting up states within the boundaries assigned to them. So far as it concerned the Jewish Agency and Haganah, this expectation was undoubtedly justified. But insofar as it applied to the Arabs, it seemed over-optimistic.

Partly because of doubts raised by this lacuna, partly because of the fact that many delegations—and not only those of the Arab states—remained unconvinced of the justice of partition, only twenty-five of the fifty-seven states in the United Nations voted in favor of the subcommittee's report when it came before the Ad Hoc Committee for consideration. Thirteen delegations voted against, seventeen abstained, and two were absent. Partition thus had failed to win a two-thirds majority of the nations voting—as it would have had to in order to carry in the full Assembly; and it had actually received the votes of less than half the member nations of the UN. Moreover, within the next few days four states—Greece, Haiti, Liberia, and the Philippines—which had abstained or had been absent in committee, announced their intention of casting negative votes when the report came before the Assembly.

But by the time the question came up for decision in the General Assembly, five days after the Committee vote, something had happened. Nine states which had not voted in the Committee were now found on the affirmative side; the negative had gained only the vote of Greece, which had previously abstained, and the abstention of Chile, which had supported the report in Committee. Siam, which had opposed the report, had in the interim ceased to be represented because the overthrow of its government by a militarist coup d'état had resulted in the dismissal of its delegate. The final vote was 33 to 13 for partition.

Most ascribed this shift in favor of partition to last-minute pressure from the American delegation. However, whatever one might think of the possibility of United States influence on Haiti, Liberia, and the Philippines—all of which had announced their intention to oppose partition and all of which voted for it—and on Paraguay, it hardly seemed likely that New Zealand, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Lux-

emburg were as susceptible to American influence on this point.

However the votes for it were obtained, the United Nations were now committed to partition. The actual execution of the plan was entrusted to a five-nation commission, representing Bolivia, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Panama, and the Philippines. If force were needed in the process of implementing partition, the nations represented on the commission were not expected to supply it. Rather, they were expected to rely, in the first instance, on the militias of the new Jewish and Arab states—which, in view of the Arab attitude, appeared to mean on Haganah. If this did not supply the commission with adequate means for preserving order, it could appeal to the Security Council for assistance. The value of this resource seemed somewhat doubtful, however, since the Security Council still had no forces at its disposal. Of the permanent members, on whom the responsibility for carrying out the will of the Council primarily rested, Britain had made it clear that her forces would not be available for the preservation of order in Palestine once she had surrendered the mandate. France and China—the one a last-minute convert to partition, the other abstaining to the end—had neither the troops to spare nor the will to use them. In the United States, public opinion polls showed that while 65 per cent of the people favored partition, only 3 per cent approved of sending American troops to enforce it. While there were rumors that Russia was quite willing to supply troops to assist in the maintenance of order in Palestine, it was clear that the Western powers were not going to welcome Russian troops into the Middle East.

After the Vote

Though they knew that victory in the UN merely began a long and difficult task, Zionists throughout the world were jubilant at the prospect that a Jewish state would be born in a matter of months. And they began to mold its image after their hearts' desires, both in those immediate practical respects which were the task of the Jewish Agency and the Jewish National Council in Jerusalem, and in those broader aspects in which the divisions in a Jewish state would parallel those in any other. Prepar-

ing for the establishment of a provisional government, sources close to the Agency let it be known that Dr. Chaim Weizmann would probably be its president, David Ben Gurion its premier, and Moshe Shertok its foreign minister. In various capitals, the Agency set about acquiring buildings for use as legations. Some British Zionists began to suggest that the new state become a dominion of the British Commonwealth—a proposition which American Zionists seemed unlikely to find acceptable. And the veteran Labor Zionist leader Marc Jarblum, informed of the vote at Lake Success while attending an international Socialist conference at Antwerp, exclaimed: "And it will be a socialist state!"

On all these questions—and, indeed, on the desirability of partition itself—the Revisionists and their terrorist offshoots had different ideas. But their dissent was lost in the midst of the general Zionist rejoicing; amidst the crowds which danced in the streets of Palestine, as well as among the celebrants in New York, their voices were for the moment unheard.

If the Revisionists were a threat with which the leaders of the Jewish Agency might have to deal in the future, the Arabs were a problem which would not wait. The supposed finality of partition was something which they were very far from accepting; when the delegates of the Arab states stalked out of the Assembly, crying out that the Charter of the United Nations had been murdered, the field of action of Arab anti-Zionism was merely transferred from Lake Success to Palestine and the entire Middle East.

In Palestine itself, the first consequence of the Assembly's decision was a three-day Arab general strike. Officially, this was supposed to be a non-violent demonstration, and there was reason to believe that sporadic and premature violence formed no part of the Palestine Arab Higher Committee's plans. However, there could have been few who really expected the strike to take place without some bloodshed. Violence, beginning in Jerusalem, spread to the Tel Aviv-Haifa borderland, then to Haifa, and finally throughout the entire country, from Safad in the north to the Negev. Two weeks after the Assembly had approved partition, the death toll in Palestine neared two hundred. Hun-

dreds more were injured by weapons ranging from sticks and stones to hand grenades and machine guns. In Jerusalem alone, the property damage was reported to exceed four million dollars.

The original initiative in the riots which occurred in widespread sections of Palestine appeared to come from the Arabs. But it did not long remain with them. On the first day of the rioting, Jewish mobs—reputedly led by the Irgun—evaded the police and Haganah guards to start fires in the Arab part of Jerusalem. Haganah served as a moderating influence, engaging in defensive activities but attempting to restrain Jewish desires to retaliate on the general Arab population. However, before long it passed to the counter-offensive. While in the first weeks, the number of Jewish victims surpassed the Arab, Haganah reprisals, combined with indiscriminate bombings and shootings by Sternists and Irgunists, reversed the casualty figures. Talk of truce disappeared, and both sides appeared to be preparing for all-out war.

The Zionist thesis had been that Arab anti-Zionism was the work of a few leaders and a small upper class, while the mass of the Arabs desired only to live in peace with their Jewish neighbors, and that there would be no insuperable difficulties in initiating that cooperation between the two groups which was recognized as a *sine qua non* for the viability of the future state as soon as the nations of the world had made an unequivocal decision. Events did not seem to be bearing this thesis out.

If there was to be an Arab rebellion against partition, it was probably better from the Zionist point of view to have it now rather than later. The recruiting offices which had been opened in the Arab states were just beginning to enroll volunteers for the struggle in Palestine; they had as yet done comparatively little to arm and train them. Above all, the British were still in Palestine, and committed to the preservation of order until their surrender of the mandate next May. While the Jewish Agency and Haganah representatives protested that the British police had in many cases been inactive, or actually killed Haganah men in unprovoked attacks, the presence of British police and troops probably prevented the totals of casualties and damage from rising higher than they did. British

armored cars, directed from reconnaissance planes, helped, in the early stages of disorder, to break up mobs and avert large-scale conflicts.

In the Arab World

Meanwhile, the repercussions of partition were making themselves felt in other parts of the Arab world. In the Protectorate of Aden, anti-Jewish riots flared up. Before they had been put down by British troops rushed in from the nearby Crown Colony of Aden, they had claimed more than one hundred victims, mostly Jewish.

For the moment, however, Arab resentment against partition only sporadically took the form of anti-Jewish violence. The Baghdad papers reported that Jews had "contributed" two million dollars for the fight against the Jewish state; and in Egypt, the Jews were called upon to follow the example of the Iraqi Jews and contribute "generously" to the "Save Palestine Fund," in order to dissociate themselves from Zionism. In Baghdad—which had the largest Jewish community to be found in any Arab land other than Palestine—it was even reported that some of the marchers in the anti-partition demonstrations were Jews.

The Baghdad anti-partition demonstrations used generalized anti-imperialist slogans as well as specifically anti-Zionist ones, and appear to have been directed primarily against the United States. In Egypt, the demonstrations which took place were more anti-American and anti-British than anti-Jewish, a fact which lent some credence to the report that Egyptian Communists played a part in their organization. At the headquarters of the Arab League in Cairo, secretary-general Abdul Rahman Azzam Pasha told one crowd of demonstrators that the Arabs would fight, but that their cause would not be won by fighting in the streets. He also called on them to remember their duty to the foreigners within their gates. Perhaps more important than the demonstrations was the proclamation of a holy war by the council of Al Azhar, the world's premier Moslem university.

In Syria, there were demonstrations in Damascus, in which the principal targets were the United States and Russia. Demonstrators burned three automobiles belonging to the American Legation, and when

troops prevented them from reaching the Russian Embassy, they consoled themselves by wrecking the offices of the local Communist party and killing or injuring a number of its members.

In Lebanon, students demonstrated and strikes occurred in Beirut, but the Lebanese Central Committee for Palestine urged that strikes and demonstrations be abandoned in favor of fund-raising for the cause. Meanwhile, fourteen hundred volunteers enrolled to fight in Palestine on the first day that the recruiting office in Beirut was open.

In only one Arab state did there seem to be no likelihood of either popular or official action against partition. Emir Abdullah of Transjordan—whom the Zionists and the Mufti had long despised as a British puppet—had appealed for peace in the weeks before the vote, and he had not associated himself fully with any of the plans for resisting the establishment of a Jewish state.

One reason for this may have been that he hoped that partition would eventually result in a merger between the Arab part of Palestine and Transjordan. It was not altogether certain, however, that if such a merger were to occur it would be altogether to Abdullah's advantage. For it was quite possible that he would find that not he, but the Mufti, would dominate such a combined state. Certainly the Arab section of Palestine was richer and more modern, as well as more populous, than Transjordan. And in the Arab world as a whole, there seemed little doubt that the Mufti's stock stood higher than did Emir Abdullah's.

But the latter also had certain potential advantages in the struggle for supremacy. In the first place, he might reasonably count on the support of his fellow Hashemites on the throne of Iraq—though their power was limited by the relatively high degree of popular participation in that country's political life. (Indeed, revolutions and counter-revolutions had in recent years taken place within the framework of the Iraqi monarchy, with consequent drastic alterations in its foreign policy.)

In the second place, Emir Abdullah had at least the nominal allegiance of the Arab Legion, trained and commanded by British officers and generally agreed to be much the best military force in the Arab world. How much advantage he might derive from

this depended, in large part, on the extent to which the British were willing to get involved.

And finally, it was by no means beyond the bounds of possibility that an alliance of convenience might be formed between Abdullah and the Zionists. Certainly, Abdullah's interest in expanding his territory to include the Arab part of Palestine was one of the few factors in the Arab world which offered the Zionists any scope for maneuver. The differences and rivalries between the other Arab states might decrease the effectiveness of their common action against Zionism, but there was no chance that any of them would find common ground with it.

The Prospective Immigrants

If Jews in the Arab countries were not faced with immediate large-scale violence, it nevertheless seemed clear that their position was neither comfortable nor likely to become more so, in the near future. Arab spokesmen at Lake Success might, and often did, make distinctions between Zionists and Jews. But these distinctions were more difficult for the common people of the Arab countries.

In Egypt, Zionism had already resulted in the first anti-Jewish riots in almost a thousand years. Similarly, in other Arab countries in which the Jews had lived for centuries, their position was now becoming increasingly untenable.

Most Zionist leaders recognized the existence of this by-product of their movement; for many among them it cast a shadow over the enthusiasm with which they greeted the establishment of a Jewish state. Others, however, felt also that it promised a rich reservoir of immigrants for Palestine when the DP camps should have been emptied and the possibilities of further immigration from Eastern Europe cut off by the Iron Curtain. And these new immigrants would have a birth rate equal to that of the Arabs.

Meanwhile, Europe was still the principal source of immigrants for Palestine. The DP camps of Germany and Austria were full to overflowing, and at times newcomers would pour into them afresh at a rate of thousands a month. Desperately, the American authorities in Austria tried to transfer some of their wards to camps in Germany; their

equally desperate colleagues in the American Military Government of Germany refused to hear of the idea.

However, it appeared that relief was in sight—if not for the Jews of Eastern Europe, at least for the custodians of the DP camps. In Rumania, where the Communists had for two years kept the veteran anti-Semite Georg Tatarescu in office as foreign minister, they now felt strong enough to substitute for him the leader of the Communist party, Ana Pauker. The new foreign minister—herself the daughter of a rabbi—almost immediately took the initiative in securing an agreement with Hungary for the closing of the escape routes by which Jews had been leaving Rumania in droves.

The official reason for this agreement was that too many political opponents of the existing regime had been escaping; it was impossible to stop them without sealing the borders. This was undoubtedly one reason for Mrs. Pauker's action, but there may have been others. For one thing, Russia's interest in encouraging illegal immigration to Palestine was considerably reduced by the fact that it would no longer be an effective means of embarrassing the British. For another, Mrs. Pauker differed from Tatarescu in that she unquestionably wanted Rumania's Jews to stay in the country—where she hoped that they might form a bulwark of the new regime against a popular opposition some sections of which were not free of anti-Semitism—whereas Tatarescu had almost certainly welcomed Jewish emigration.

Perhaps something of the same tendency on the part of the Communist regime to regard Rumania's Jews as an integral part of the community was shown in the new drive to make their organizations conform to the official pattern. Dr. William Filderman, who had for two years fought to preserve the autonomy of Jewish organizations in the face of Communist pressure, finally felt compelled to resign as chairman of the Union of Rumanian Jews and president of the Federation of Jewish Communities. The reason given was "acute shortage of funds." A few days later, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency reported that representatives of all Jewish political organizations *except* the Union of Rumanian Jews had met to demand the reorganization of the governing boards of the Jewish communities. These

boards, they charged, contained representatives of the suppressed National Peasant party and the about-to-be-suppressed Liberal party, who hampered "the natural development of the Jewish communities and the democratization of Jewish life." They appointed a committee to present lists of suggested personnel for the new governing boards to the minister of public worship—a former Iron Guard leader.

Illegal Immigration—Past and Future

If the barriers erected by the East European states against Jewish emigration remained in force and proved airtight, the pressure for admission to Palestine in the immediate future would to some extent decline. However, it seemed reasonable to expect that while the flood of Jews from countries within the Soviet sphere would taper off somewhat, it would not completely cease for some time to come.

In any case, there remained the estimated 250,000 displaced Jews in Germany, Austria, and Italy. Unless the Jewish state were to decide on a drastic upward revision of the quota of 150,000 immigrants which the UNSCOP had suggested for the next two years, many of them would have a long time to wait. The British announced that their 1,500-a-month immigration quota for Jews would not be raised until they had left Palestine. Presumably, the British naval and air blockade of Palestine would be enforced until then.

Another factor in the situation was the Jewish Agency's desire to get immigrants from the United States and other Western nations. It seemed probable, too, that a sizable allowance would have to be made for Jews from the Arab countries, like those who were now fleeing Aden.

Illegal immigration in the past two years had had, unfortunately, far more success in keeping the DP's—and the rest of the world—at fever heat than in getting additional Jews into Palestine. When the "Aliyah" succeeded in slipping past the blockade with 187 immigrants, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency reported that this was the first such instance in almost a year (many other Jews, of course, were on intercepted ships, and had ended up in Cyprus)—a small result indeed as against the expenditure of money, energy, and blood which had been put into

the smuggling of immigrants into Palestine. However, illegal immigration, in addition to attempting to serve an immediate need, had had important political uses: it had put terrific pressure on the British, directly and through the influence of an outraged public opinion in England and America, and it had served as one area in which the Haganah could compete with the Irgun and Sternists in the field of intense nationalist feeling.

Illegal immigration would no longer play a part in the plans of the official Zionist movement. But just as it had served the Zionist leaders as a weapon against the British, so now it might become an instrument for the terrorist groups in any struggle for power over the Jewish state.

Perhaps it was the expectation of some such development which inspired the campaign the Haganah was now waging to bar the Irgun from the routes leading from the DP camps to the Mediterranean. The aftermath of one grim battle, in which a group of Irgunists had attempted to rescue some of their comrades held prisoner by the Haganah in a DP camp in the French zone of Austria, had been the death of one Haganah man. Now nineteen Irgunists faced a French military court, charged with his murder.

The IRO

But mechanical control of routes would not reduce the pressure of DP's desiring

to emigrate. One possible avenue of hope was in the work of the International Refugee Organization in resettling its charges in countries other than Palestine.

So far its achievements in this respect had been anything but spectacular. England had admitted some DP's; so had France. Few of these were Jews, however, since both countries sought chiefly miners and agricultural workers. Canada had admitted a few thousand; so had other British dominions and some Latin American countries. But perhaps the best measure of IRO's success in dealing with the problem it faced was that the 25,000 Jews admitted to the United States in the past year—within the quota system, since the Stratton and other bills designed to make DP entry easier still languished in committee—were more than any other country had accepted.

If the IRO was to function more effectively in the future, it was clear that it would require additional funds. Instead, however, it was now faced by insistence on the part of the member nations—above all, by the United States—that it cut its budget for resettlement still further. Even judged purely from the point of view of the economy-minded, this seemed like doubtful wisdom. For the less effective the work of resettlement, the longer it would be necessary to maintain the DP's in their present unproductive state. And this was more expensive than an intelligent plan of resettlement would have been.